

IDOLATRY IN AMERICA

Idolatry In America

By

JAMES W. JOHNSON

Author of "Fundamentalism versus Modernism"



NEW YORK

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

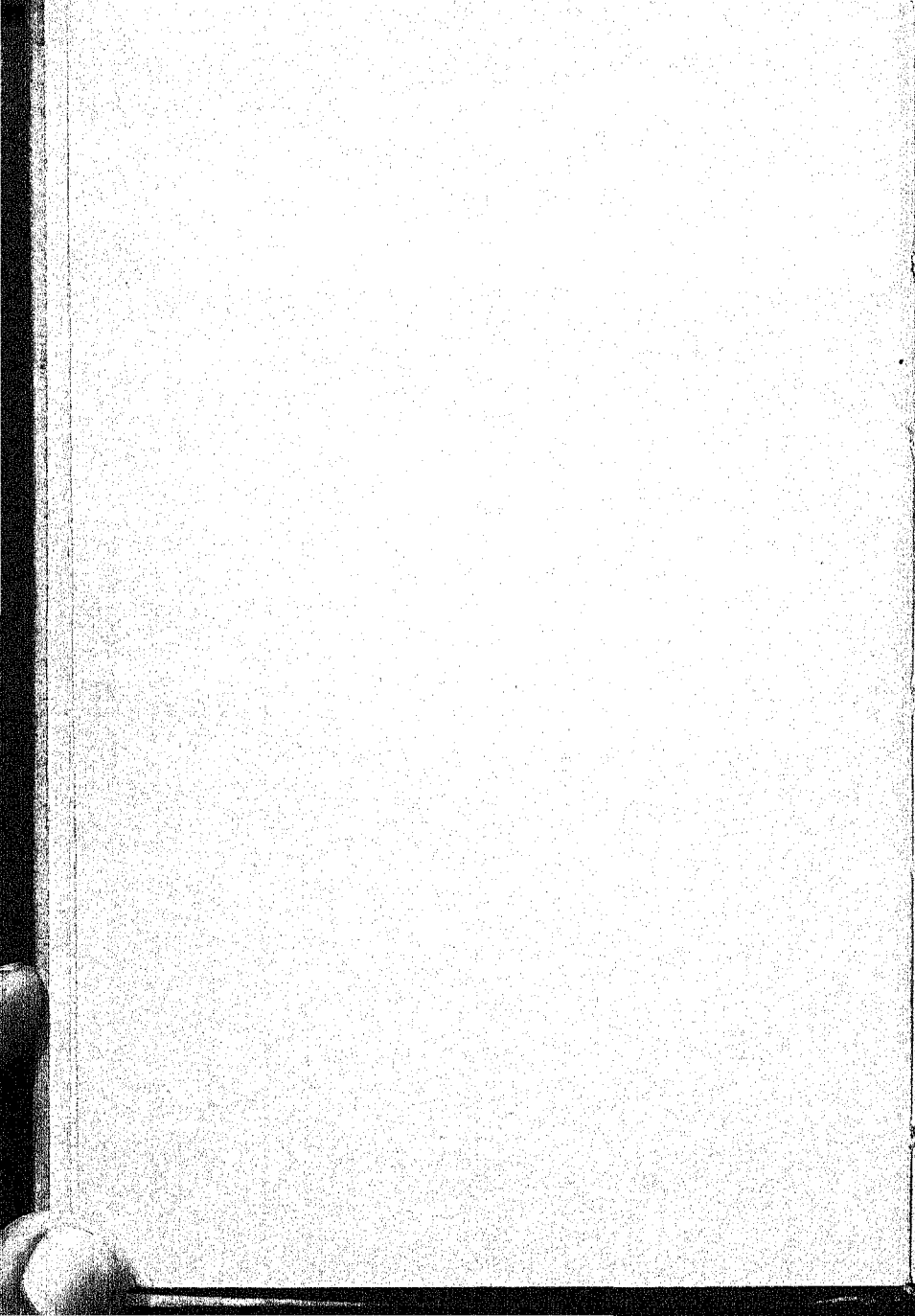
Copyright, MCMXXXVII, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

All rights reserved: no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the Publisher, except by a reviewer desiring to quote brief passages for inclusion in a notice to be inserted in a newspaper or periodical.

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
London: 21 Paternoster Square

CONTENTS

I. America Yesterday and Today	7
II. Christ and the Nations . . .	21
III. A Broadside from Christ . . .	29
IV. Divine Providence and Human Disobedience	39
V. National Policies and Chris- tian Principles	49



I

AMERICA YESTERDAY AND TODAY



I

AMERICA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Human Nature Changeable

IT is commonly accepted that human nature changes but little and even that little changes very slowly. Civilization changes more rapidly and imposes new customs, habits, and methods of thinking on mankind. But under these surface changes the essential human nature is found to be just about the same as it was centuries ago.

God Unchangeable

Another commonly accepted fact is that God changes not at all. He is the same "yesterday, today, and for ever." At least this fact is accepted by all who believe the written statements regarding God found in the Bible. If we admit that God is one kind of a personality to-

day and quite another personality tomorrow, we find ourselves, mentally at least, in the upheaval of a mighty earthquake; the very foundations of our thoughts and beliefs are uprooted and we are in chaos.

Relationship between God and Man

What is the relationship between God and man? Here again there is no answer or any plausible theory unless we accept the statements of the written Word. In fact all the most difficult problems of human life are either unanswerable or are practically explained by theories almost as many as the individuals who accept them. And these theories in turn vary in detail *ad infinitum*. God's explanations of these mysteries, although not completely satisfying to human reason, are sufficiently adequate for our needs. It is made plain in Scripture that the relationship between divinity and humanity is the relationship between Father and son. Human life is inexplicable unless we accept the statement that God is the Creator

of it. All the wise men of all the ages have sought and questioned and sought again as to how the universe and human life were created. The answer is as much hidden in mystery as when the solution was first sought, unless we accept the simple statements of the Word, that God in the beginning created both the universe and all kinds of life. If, therefore, He created the race of men, is it not reasonable that He should be responsible for their welfare and for their ultimate destiny, at least in part?

Free Will and Human Destiny

To be sure, man is created with a free will and can determine to a large extent his own happiness, peace, and destiny. On the other hand, man frequently finds himself in a place where neither his brains, his struggles, nor his power can save him from catastrophe. Just here the power and mercy of Almighty God have intervened in numberless cases to save His children from destruction.

Proofs from Experience

The truth has been confirmed by individual experience in so many instances, that faith in God's saving power is one of the foundation stones of religious belief. It is also true that "God helps him who helps himself." Without the faith and co-operation of the individual, it was found that even the divine power of Christ was limited or became of no avail.

Logical Conclusion from Ancient History

Now we come to the all important question. How can I so conduct myself that I may be sure of God's help when I cannot help myself? The answer is no less clear and glorious than the essential dealings of God with mankind. Refer to the ancient history of Israel. What happened to them when slaves in Egypt, ground down under the heel of the oppressor, until their lot was one of hopeless suffering and despair? Answer: The ten plagues in Egypt which so terrified the

King and his princes that the Hebrews were given their freedom and were besought to leave the land of bondage with all possible speed. What happened when Pharaoh changed his mind and followed the pitiable refugees to the Red Sea to capture them again and bring them back to slavery? Answer: The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the entire loss of the Egyptian army. Both in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the Children of Israel had followed the commands of God, so far as in their power to do so. Even then destruction threatened them with catastrophe. Just then the power and love of God intervened to save them. After about 5000 years, these great events in their history are still annually remembered and celebrated by devout and sincere Jews.

Evidence from Modern Experience

Turn for a moment to our own history. A few hundred years ago, 1620 to be exact, our Pilgrim ancestors landed at Plymouth Rock. They had been hounded

out of their homeland by religious persecution. They were commanded by the authorities to worship God according to a certain and definite way. They refused to do so. They claimed the right to worship according to the dictates of their conscience. For such brazen and independent thinking they were harassed, tormented, and persecuted, until in despair they boarded the *Mayflower* and landed at Plymouth Rock. There a grim reception awaited them. The woods were full of wild beasts and wilder and more cruel red men. At that season of the year it was impossible to cultivate the soil. Only by killing wild beasts could they exist. To add to their sufferings, sickness fell upon the little group. In despair, some of them advocated a return to the home country. But the majority were men and women of iron character, determined to win out or to die in their noble effort. Note that obedience to God and loving service to each other were the fundamental and moving ideals of these heroes.

The Glorious Result

What might have been expected duly came to pass. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Success came at last after long effort and severe struggles. They succeeded and maintained a real home in the new land. What a future awaited their descendants! The richest and most powerful nation on the face of the earth. The marvellous triumphs of science in harnessing the forces of nature read like a fairy tale. The incalculable wealth of the soil, the fabulous treasures of our mines, the flowing river of gold from our oil wells, heat, light, and electricity transmuted into dollars, have resulted in a prosperity which is the envy of all other nations.

The Sad Fall

And now that such unequalled success is ours, how are we using our heritage? Just like Israel of old, we have turned to the worship of heathen gods; their idols are in nearly every home. Their names

have changed but not their essence. Love of money, not for service to others but to satisfy selfish pleasure, sometimes worthy, often degrading, base and sensual. Love of power to exploit our fellow men. A craze for notoriety and to shine in the limelight of popular acclaim. Greed, avarice, and a hardness and indifference to the needs and sufferings of others which are simply appalling, inhuman, and devilish. Such aims and ambitions are certainly far from Christ's teachings and His life.

The Exceptions

I do not say that such base motives are true of all. That is not so. There are with us and a part of our intimate life, thank God, many gracious souls filled with earnest love for God and a sincere desire to serve their fellow men. And this they do with heart and soul and strength. But is this true of the great majority of American citizens, the millions and millions passing on the streets of our cities

today, and other millions living on their farms or busy in many industries?

Failure of the Majority

Honesty compels a negative answer. If God so severely punished the Israelites for their idolatry, and the base, obscene, and most horrible rites common to such worship; and since God is the same yesterday, today, and for ever, is it any wonder that humanity today is worried, harassed, and filled with fear for the future?

Result of Suffering—World War

The base, degrading, selfish sin of the nations brought on the punishment of the World War. Immediately after this horror had passed, there was a firm determination on the part of individuals and nations that never again would they permit such a triumph of blood, agony, and devilry. That last horror should be the last war. A fine determination indeed and most worthy of common sense.

Weak Human Nature

And where is the glorious vision now? Just where dreams so often end, a burst soap bubble, and why? Because the true reason for war has not been commonly realized.

In a little pamphlet written in 1914, the beginning of the World War, and entitled: "The Meaning of War and the Basis for Permanent Peace," I made the following statement:

"Is this the last great war? There is no reason for thinking so, unless mankind has reached that stage of development, of evolution if you like, where common sense at last prevails over stupid perversity. If that wonderful day is dawning, when at last the Ruler of the universe is recognized as a God that punishes as well as a Father that loves and saves, then there is hope of permanent peace, and not till then.

"It may be suggested that, according to this theory, America is spotless since she

has not yet at least been drawn into the vortex of this whirlwind of madness; and we know that such is far from being the truth. No, our fair land is smirched and soiled with the same vileness and criminal folly. But America is still a young nation; God is still patient with her; there is ample time for her to fill to the brim her cup of iniquity and to so weary the patience of Almighty God that at last she, too, will feel the lightning and the fury of His wrath. At times we can almost hear the warning, and can almost see the flash of the distant storm. I make no pretense of reading the future; but I do claim the moderate amount of intelligence needed to understand simple cause and simple effect. A child cannot expect to play with fire and escape burnt fingers, perhaps a fatal burn. How else can we learn common sense except by the teachings of experience? God has plainly said that He would never leave nor forsake His children on earth. He has proved this truth countless times in the past. Certainly He

has had good and sufficient reason to leave us to ourselves and the certain destruction that would inevitably overwhelm such ignorant, stupid, and devilish sin as has characterized mankind throughout his history."

II

CHRIST AND THE NATIONS

II

CHRIST AND THE NATIONS

The Pleasant Leader

GOD'S commands are not so difficult. No one of average intelligence can read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, without admitting that Christ's life is the most beautiful the world has ever seen. Such a reader will also admit that following Christ is not impossible. We cannot have His miraculous power, nor can we hope for His divine intelligence. But we can give our devoted love to God and we can devote our lives to human welfare. Millions will bear witness to the fact that such living results in the only happy life known to mankind. Why then don't all people live that way? Why indeed? Please answer a question beyond my knowledge.

No Christian Nation

A terrible indictment of the nations follows as a sequence, if the above stated premises are true: After twenty centuries of God on earth in the person of Christ, it still remains true that there is not, to-day, a Christian nation on the face of the earth. By this, of course, I mean that there is no nation whose laws are founded and executed on the principles of Christ.

Minority Christians

Some nations do very Christian things, such as their interest in the Red Cross, their care of starving people, their sense of justice and fair play. These are spasmodic and irregular evidences of the Christ spirit in men. On the average the prevailing national idea is intense nationalism; "the devil take the hindermost;" "to the victor belongs the spoils." The real safety of a nation is mistakenly supposed to depend upon its ability to keep out of debt and to pile up an enormous treasury balance, so that every other

nation may well fear the potential possibility of success in war for such a favored nation.

False Again to Christ

These principles and policies do not sound much like Christ's ideals. They are not.

The Dangerous Result

They are the principles and the policies of stupid men, guided and stimulated by the devil. They will surely lead us into severe friction with our neighbor nations; in due course of time, even into war, as the hectoring, teasing, and browbeating of a little fellow by a big brute will eventually lead to a fight, perhaps to murder.

The Christ Idea

For just a moment stop with me and consider the meaning of Christ's ideals in terms of modern living. First of all, we need education in God's way of dealing with His children on earth. This, in turn,

means reading and studying His Word, both Old and New Testaments.

Need of Christian Education

In reading the Old Testament, it must be kept in mind that the messages of prophet, priest, and king were suited to the knowledge and intelligence of that period. When we read the New Testament, we must remember that the people were enjoying the teaching and the thought of Greece and Rome at their greatest periods of knowledge. The letters of Paul would have been of no meaning to the Hebrews of Moses' day. But in the time of Christ, the same letters presented the strongest kind of appeal. In the Old Testament we have a brief but comprehensive definition of the truly religious life.

Micah's Statement Compared to that of Christ

Turn to Micah 6:8: "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,

and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Is there anything so tremendously difficult or impossible about such a method of living? Christ states the same idea in even simpler and more glorious words: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12: 30, 31).

Stupidity of the Nations

Is there anything so very strange or abhorrent about this command? Millions of happy souls will gladly testify that such a life is the only happy one. And yet after twenty centuries proving the value of such principles, there is not a nation on earth willing to commit itself to such a policy. Every other system of government, which the ingenuity or stupidity of man can devise, has been tried and has failed. The plan of living stated by God Almighty in Christ has never been tried

and perhaps never will be. The alternative consequence is no less clearly stated by divine wisdom.

We do nevertheless acknowledge that the principles and the spirit of Christ have controlled the lives of thousands of Christian believers. The results have been truly beneficial in every land. If this leaven of Christian character could only operate on a larger scale, the influence of Christ's sway would be extensively redemptive.

III

A BROADSIDE FROM CHRIST



III

A BROADSIDE FROM CHRIST

Partial Understanding of Christ

TO all those who think of Christ as the meek and loving Jesus, always patient and forgiving man's folly and wilful breaking of God's laws, I recommend the most scathing and terrible arraignment known in literature—Matthew 23: 13-33:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is

made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God and by him that sitteth thereon.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye

to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto your-

selves, that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets.

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? "

This is the most terrible denunciation in all literature because written by God Himself in the person of Christ. And who are these who are threatened in such terrible language? Are they murderers, thieves, degraded, debased, or villains through and through? Not at all. They are respected, highly educated, esteemed members of society. They are the leaders of thought in the community. Why then are they so terribly condemned? For just one reason. They are shams, they are not sincere, they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Professing one way of life, they live the opposite. Moreover those seeking the true way of life are seduced and bewildered by these false teachers. Christ could not abide hypocrisy. No matter how sinful or degraded a man might be,

if such a man really repented of his sin and made full and sincere confession, Christ forgave him, and the joy of peace and faith created new courage to arise and fight for self-mastery and a better way of living.

Shams of Today

How are we different or better than the hypocritical "Scribes and Pharisees"? Is there really any difference? Take those of us who have professed that Christ is our leader and that we will do our utmost to live as He lived. Have we been true to such promises? Have we really sacrificed ourselves, our wishes, or our property for Him and the betterment of our fellow men? Is it not rather true that we have followed Him a little way, and when we found that real sacrifice was demanded or even a measure of suffering, have we not fallen backward and declined the rough and rugged road so clearly indicated? In other words, are we not professors in name largely? Are

we not really shams and hypocrites? If this is true of respectable church members, what shall be said of the vast majority who seem to be troubled not at all by any obligation to God or any responsibility towards their fellow men? It is admitted by all students of church life and prosperity, that the dismal failure of the Church to rise to a commanding position in any crisis is due to the lukewarmness and insincerity of its members. We are far indeed from being of that "stuff of which the martyrs were made." We may try as we may to blink this solemn fact; we may hang our heads in shame because of our failures; and yet facts are facts and cannot be controverted.

Causes of War

In the first chapter some reasons were given for the great war. Bear with me for another quotation as to such reasons: "Drunkenness everywhere; vice, commercialized or otherwise, rampant in city, town, village, even in the home; lust

of gold and lust of power consuming the hearts and filling the minds of multitudes; trifling with justice in the name of the law; supreme indifference to the agony and suffering of the poor, envy, jealousy, hatred, common as the air we breathe! That is but the beginning of the list of crimes and follies of the present day; a condition which has long existed and which has caused an agony so great that the cry has long been ascending to the very gates of heaven, 'How long, oh Lord, how long?' The answer to that cry is being heard in the present war" (1914).

Reasoned from Christ's Statements

Such statements will seem to many as the vaporings of a silly mind, perhaps unduly stressing the peccadillos common to all humanity. But if you believe in God and if you take Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as a clear though partial explanation of Him, you cannot doubt the truth so bluntly stated.



IV

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN
DISOBEDIENCE



IV

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN DISOBEDIENCE

God's Love for and Interest in His Children

WE are apt to forget and moreover we may even deny that God is sincerely and passionately in love with His children on earth. But Christ says that even one sparrow does not fall to the ground without God, or to be more explicit, without His knowledge. And He adds, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10: 29, 30). Does this not mean that God is interested in even the small details of our lives? You cannot doubt it.

Problem of Original Sin

Why then, you say, does He allow so much misery, suffering, poverty, and

death among His children? I also will ask you why He created the universe, the earth, human life, animal life, plant life? I can ask you a thousand questions you cannot answer. All we can say is, He has not thought it best to reveal to finite minds truths fit only for infinite wisdom, love, and power. You are dissatisfied, even angry at such an answer. You say you cannot love and obey a God Who will not trust you with knowledge so deeply necessary to your peace of mind. That is your affair. If you cannot take God on His own terms, you cannot take Him at all. You are not essential to Him. He is most essential to you. Moreover faith in Him and in His wisdom is one of the foundation stones of true religion. Of course, this simple argument is of no use to those who do not believe in God as explained in His Word.

The Folly of Sin

I have been trying to show you the danger of continuous, flagrant, insulting vio-

lations of God's commands. Our country is partner with all other nations in such wilful stupidity. If we persist in such insane folly, the consequences are inevitable. Before Christ came to earth, war, bloodshed, agony, sufferings beyond expression were common in all nations. Since He was nailed to the cross, the same horrible record has been written. No one can read the future but every one with a modicum of common sense can reason from cause to effect. The cause is the changeless nature of God, the effect is seen in the needless suffering of humanity. I say needless, for it is positively true, as witnessed by the history of Israel, that to obey God means peace, prosperity, and happiness to the nation as well as to the individual.

Wars and Rumors of Wars

Today wars and rumors of war are all about us. Italy like a brutal man with a club pounced upon Ethiopia and almost beat the life out of her victim. All na-

tions were scandalized by the outrage. And yet the great nations, represented in the League of Nations, did nothing more than expostulate at the atrocity. Why? Because the dread fear of a general war has blotted out any other consideration. Not by such cowardice can the horror of a World War be escaped. Our own history proves that at times men and heroes must take their lives in their own hands and be willing to die for right, justice, and liberty. There are some degradations worse than war and death.

Furthermore, the cowardice of the nations has been an acceleration rather than a hindrance of war. Today we hear Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin openly threatening the peace of Europe, as they boast and strut and rattle the saber. The civil war has deluged Spain with floods of blood and may yet prove a menace to the world. Japan is slowly but surely tightening her strangle hold on China. No doubt the four hundred million Chinese will soon be under control of the warlike, brave,

and ruthless Japanese. Then perhaps will come the long predicted war between East and West. In such an event Japan will be fully able to wipe out the slur and disgrace so foolishly put upon her some years ago by America, when Japan was forbidden to send her excess millions to settle on our country. Our policy at that time was wise, but foolishly and brutally stated to Japan. Courtesy and firmness should have been used, not brutal insult. We sowed the wind. Perhaps we shall reap the whirlwind. This could be avoided by the practice of the square deal with frank cordiality.

Possible Collapse of Civilization

It may be that the overwhelming World Wars looming above the horizon may blot out civilization itself, and mankind be reduced to the stone age again. Even so it must be admitted in honesty that the stupid brutality and the insane avarice and greed of today deserve such a terrible catastrophe.

An Illustration

"A loving father has a wilful, disobedient son. After all other measures of correction fail, the father as a last resort applies the rod. A good, sound thrashing will do more for that boy than hours of counsel and tender advice. The result proves the wisdom of the father, and the lad grows into a worthy man. War is nothing more than the punishment of God upon wilful, disobedient people, who will never obey until they are compelled through suffering to turn from their selfishness and follies to the soul's last resort, God. The punishment may entail rivers of blood and oceans of tears, but the means are justified by the end, at least in this case. Furthermore, no other means have ever been found adequate."

A False Conclusion

This may sound too extreme and many will say if that is your idea of God I want nothing to do with Him, and if that is

your idea of religion I prefer atheism. Well and good. Your decision is your right. But note one fact more. The loving father is not the cause of the punishment. The brutal stupidity and perversity of the son is the cause of the punishment. God is never the cause of war nor the cause of any other suffering of humanity. These sufferings are caused by the same brutal stupidity and perversity. Don't blame God for what is your own fault. At least be honest and just.

V

NATIONAL POLICIES AND CHRISTIAN
PRINCIPLES



V

NATIONAL POLICIES AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Christ in Government

LET us suppose that at some distant day some nation, wearied and disgusted by the failures of the usual policies tried for several thousands of years, should take Christ at His word and should endeavor to embody His principles in government. How would such an experiment work out? Take the tariff for instance. There is no more difficult nor widely discussed problem in our government. When one political party comes into control, the tariff is raised; when the opposing party comes into control, the tariff is lowered. Why? Because although the principles of each party may be different in some degree, the fundamental policy of both is the same, viz.:

money, profit, financial success. It makes no difference whether or not such financial success is won at the expense of a poor or half-starved nation. If China, India, Africa, or the Islands of the Sea are desperately in need of foodstuffs and if America is overstocked with such goods, still we must not part with our goods except at the highest price possible to squeeze out of our unfortunate neighbors across the seas. The one dominant factor is how much profit can we make; the distress of other nations is of little or no consequence.

A Narrow Policy

Such a narrow grasping policy is far indeed from the theory or the practice of Christ. The result is to make all other nations feel that we are a nation of money grabbers. And is not that the truth? Of course, in times of catastrophe such as earthquakes, floods, famine, etc., we, together with other nations, combine to lend assistance. But such action is the ex-

ception and not the rule of our procedure. Intense nationalism founded on great money power and all that such power stands for, is the foundation stone on which is established our policy of internationalism. The same is true of all nations. In fact the conditions prevailing among the nations of Europe are worse than in our country. The tariff walls surrounding the various nations of Europe are higher and more irritating than are our own barriers. These very high tariff walls are the cause of unending controversy and bitterness. In fact it seems most probable that the hate thus engendered finally has led to more than one war, with all its endless suffering and the grim determination to get even with a most unfriendly neighbor.

The Tariff

Now just suppose, for example, that the very difficult problem of the tariff could be approached from the Christian standpoint. How different would be the

conclusion! Our first thought then would be not how to exploit foreign nations but how best to serve them. The first step would be to encourage all our farmers to raise all the foodstuffs possible. Wheat, corn, barley, rye, and cotton would be produced to the limit of our capacity. The same with hogs, steers, and all the necessities of life. We would produce much more than would be needed for home consumption. The great excess could be used for the real needs of half-starved people in lands not so fortunate as our own. Furthermore, we would be willing to ship abroad this great excess at a price within the power of our suffering neighbors to pay.

Mass Production

Henry Ford has shown the wisdom of producing in mass, at a price absolutely impossible when production is compelled at a minimum, with the hope of thereby raising prices to a false standard. In fact such a policy would settle our farm prob-

lem. With immense crops sold at a small price, our farmers would be better off than with limited crops sold at prices unjustifiably high. Moreover, such intensive farming would absorb a large part of our present unemployed men. And yet, could such a Utopian policy be carried through our Congress or Senate? One can almost hear the shouts of derision that would greet any Senator or Congressman bold enough to make such a suggestion. He would be called a madman or a crazy fanatic. No, dear friend, we are still far, far away from willingness to incorporate in our law the principles of Christ.

Money and Taxation

Let us try once more to determine how far we are from an ideal Government. The use and the abuse of money. Can anything be more difficult both for the individual or for the nation? And yet, as handled by Christ, it is a comparatively simple matter. Let us recall the condi-

tions. For several thousand years the Hebrews had been a free people except for comparatively short periods. Furthermore, as God's chosen people, they had a very exalted opinion of themselves. Therefore, when the mighty Roman Empire reduced them to the position of a subject nation and imposed upon them the hated poll tax, furious indignation filled every heart. Several abortive insurrections were quelled with the iron fist of Rome. At last, the Hebrew nation learned that the hated tax had to be paid, and the safest course to pursue was one of bitter enmity but acquiescence in the inevitable. None the less, the tax gatherers were the most cordially hated sect in the nation, and when such a person was one of their own race the contempt meted out to such a miscreant knew no bounds.

Under these conditions the enemies of Christ saw an opportunity to place Him in an impossible and perhaps dangerous position. They sent a delegation to Him to inquire of Him, whether or no they

should pay the hated tax assessment. If He said yes, then they would reply that He was no real friend of their nation and they had a good ground for stirring up opposition to Him, for He professed to be a real friend to all men. He had proved it by His wonderful works of mercy. On the other hand, if He said no, they would report Him as an enemy of Cæsar's and therefore liable to imprisonment or even death. It was a very clever trap. Christ's reply was wonderful. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." What a simple solution to a problem never yet solved in terms of actual living except by a very small minority. In the first place, He said, "If there is a tax imposed by the powers that be and it is your duty under the law to pay that tax, pay it." In other words, pay your debts.

Paying Our Debts

In these days of mounting taxes, caused

by unwise expenditures of Government or because of wasteful living, still you must pay your debts. Can any one use money more wisely than in paying his debts? Then again: "Render to God the things that are God's." What can we render to God—anything acceptable to Him? Nothing indeed except loving obedience to a gracious Father. But obedience to Him means following Christ to our utmost. Such a following will absorb all the means we possess, except such means as are necessary for our decent living. There will be nothing left for extravagance, selfish pleasure, profligacy, or degraded customs. What a heaven on earth would soon be here if such a policy were actually carried into effect in our law and our individual practice! And yet how foolish and insane a man would be accounted, who dared such an amendment to our constitution.

Sympathy and Brotherliness

In these hard times due to the world

depression and especially since the crash of 1929, our Government is hard put to it to find means to keep alive many of our citizens. With the wisdom of Christ followed, every man would minister to the real needs of his suffering neighbor, as explained in the matchless story of the man falling among thieves while on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. No longer the need to feed millions and millions of American citizens, at the cost of so many billions of Government funds that our national treasury is in serious financial straits. How wise was Christ and how foolish and short-sighted are we in our failures to follow Him. Some will reply that probably Christ never had ten dollars in His pocket and that, therefore, He cannot be taken as a criterion of financial procedure. Your thesis is probably correct but your conclusion is utterly false. He looked beyond the superficial to the real and the fundamental. If there is any one thing needed by this poor old suffering world, it is loving sympathy and

brotherly help. This is just what Christ lived and died for. Every individual who believes in Him and who puts into practice His glorious principles of living, finds the only true happiness and peace of mind possible in this difficult world.

Again, it must be remembered that Christ was a hard working man, a carpenter. We may be sure He gave a full day of honest work for the very pitiful wage then prevalent for the working man. As the eldest son, He felt the maintenance of the family depending on Him. He learned the common sense found only by those successfully battling with the hard conditions of life prevailing in a time of distress and hardship, such as the Jews of His day had to endure.

The Solution of Friendship

Think for a moment of some of the other blots of our civilization. War is unthinkable among sincere friends and such friends would be everywhere about us, because enmity could find no foothold

in the atmosphere of brotherly kindness and real help. This is not a visionary supposition; it is actual fact. Prove it for yourself. If you have been a true friend to those in your neighborhood, you have won their affection, and in your trouble and distress you will experience the sweetest thing in life, the real love and help of your neighbors. In a world patterned on this plan, war could not again curse our civilization. How about avarice, sensuality, drunkenness, criminal folly of all kinds? Are such hideous ways of life possible in any nation whose laws are founded and executed on Christian ideals? But you will say such theories are entirely Utopian and utterly impossible in the world as now constituted. Are you sure? Christ was Utopian and yet He succeeded to a greater degree than any other child of man has experienced. To be sure He died and willingly because of His ideals. And yet He still lives in those who really believe in Him and who try their best to follow Him.

The True Conclusion

The conclusion of the whole matter is that God in His wisdom came to earth in the person of Christ, to teach men how to live to best advantage and how to enjoy to the utmost their really wonderful life on earth. Some day we can make of earth a real Eden again, if we will. The way has been clearly shown. How many are willing to follow the divine leading?

Here's hoping that some day mankind will awake to the possibility of achieving real happiness and true success.

Printed in the United States of America